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Book Reviews.

Scientific Aspects of Christian Evidences. By G. FREDERICK WRIGHT. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898. Pp. xii + 350, 8vo. \$1.50.

When Canon Gore brought out Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*, he rough-hewed the path for a work which might stimulate and arouse the religious interest of many whose respect for their own learning and powers of reasoning had led them into paths diverging from those followed by orthodox churchmen. It is to be regretted that Romanes himself was not able to furnish such a work as he proposed, for he was especially endowed with the religious aspirations, fidelity to truth, and philosophical training required for the accomplishment of such a task. The present work meets in some degree the want of such a work in that it furnishes the reader with an attractive presentation of the bases of Christian belief as viewed by one who has spent his life in teaching one of the sciences.

The author presents for consideration two theses, which may be stated as follows: (1) the popular conception of the extent of absolute scientific knowledge is an exaggeration, since "it is still as true as ever that 'what we know is as nothing to what we know not;'" (2) the facts of Christianity are proved beyond any reasonable doubt, and therefore may serve as a satisfactory basis for religious hope and activity.

To establish the first of these theses Professor Wright devotes two chapters to limits of scientific thought and the paradoxes extant in scientific hypotheses. Assuming the position of "pure agnosticism" as defined by Romanes, it is evident that the mind is in a state of perfect suspense, and that the final judgment is in abeyance. Such a point of vantage leads to the view that the origin of life is still a mystery; that it is not known that existing physical conditions have existed indefinitely; that physical sciences do not rule out providential interference; and that even such well-accepted "laws" as those of gravitation and the atomic constitution are not free from serious paradoxes. These two chapters are evidently intended to induce a state of positive humility respecting everything beyond the realm of

observable phenomena; and to show that "religious philosophy does not by any means possess a monopoly of all of the mysteries of existence."

The chapter on "Mediate Miracles" introduces many of the incidents which have been the object of ridicule for unsympathetic readers. Many of these incidents, such as the escape from Nazareth or the appearance of Christ after the resurrection, are regarded as instances in which the miraculous element is probably introduced into explanations without due warrant; others, such as the passage of the Red Sea or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, arise from "miraculous adaptation of the laws of nature rather than a direct suspension of them;" while others, such as the second state of Lot's wife or the pausing of the sun for Joshua, are regarded as marginal interpolations or poetic outbursts. By far the greater portion of this chapter is devoted to the Noachian deluge as narrated in the different texts and as related to geological history. Since the author apparently adopts the view of a local subsidence, it seems somewhat out of proportion to devote so much time to a consideration of the glacial period, the formation of loess, and the views of Prestwich on the submergence of western Europe, especially as he does not attempt to show any other than the most general relation between the local event of short period and the more general events of longer duration. This chapter with the two preceding it serve as a transition to the second preparation, which occupies the remainder of the book.

That the facts of Christian belief are proven beyond reasonable doubt depends on the truthfulness of the gospels and the writing of these accounts before the close of the apostolic times. Both of these conditions are established by the evidences which are derived from the recent discoveries of texts like the Syriac Codex or the Diatessaron, and the internal evidences of time and truthfulness. It is to an explanation of the bearing of the recent work in criticism and archæology that the author devotes several of the later chapters, in which he brings together the main facts in a way that renders them available to the lay mind.

While the book might be improved by condensing certain portions (*e. g.*, chap. vi), Professor Wright is to be congratulated on presenting so many facts in a form which renders them accessible to students at a time when their faith is shaken by their first essays in scientific thinking.

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